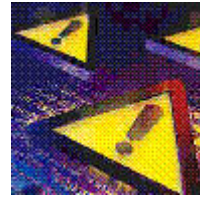


# Risks

issue no 104 – 3 May 2003



Editor: [Rory O'Neill](#) of [Hazards](#) magazine. Comments to [Owen Tudor](#)

## **In memoriam: Maureen Rooney, died 2 May 2003**

This issue of **Risks** is dedicated to the memory of Maureen Rooney CBE, Amicus AEEU Director of Equalities and member of the Health and Safety Commission. Maureen died peacefully at home from cancer on 2 May. Maureen served on the TUC's General Council from 1990 and its Executive from 1998. She was a former Vice-President of the National Childminder's Association and was on the Board of Management for the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit. She was a member of the TUC and Labour Party Women's Committee. Health and safety was part of her trade union work from her early days working for Hoover, and she was responsible for the TUC's early work on stress before becoming fully involved through the HSC where she was the Commission's champion for hazardous industries. She was also a member of the EU Advisory Committee on Safety, Hygiene and Health at Work. TUC's Owen Tudor said: "this is a truly sad day. Maureen was stalwart in her defence of the working environment of the ordinary working people she represented, but she did her work so gently and was so funny and warm that she could charm a result out of any meeting."

- [HSC profile](#)

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**Risks** is the TUC’s weekly online bulletin for safety reps and others, read each week by over 7,000 subscribers and 1,500 on the TUC website. To receive this bulletin every week, click [here](#). Past issues are [available](#). This edition contains [Useful links](#) [Disclaimer and Privacy statement](#).

## FEATURE ON WORKERS’ MEMORIAL DAY

### **Workers nationwide call for corporate accountability**

Hundreds of events involving tens of thousands of workers across the UK marked Workers’ Memorial Day, 28 April 2003, and heard calls for dangerous employers to face realistic penalties – including jail – for workplace safety crimes. Bill Morris, general secretary of transport union TGWU, said: “It is time to increase law enforcement and promote corporate accountability so that those companies and directors who negligently or recklessly cause death, injury or disease, or who place others at unacceptable risk, are held to account.” Bereaved families from London, Coventry, Essex, Dorset, Rotherham, Cornwall, Cardiff, Plymouth, Oxford, London and Somerset, petitioned 10 Downing Street, calling on the government to introduce legislation that will “create a new offence of corporate killing and impose safety duties upon company directors.” Derek Simpson, joint general secretary of Amicus, said 249 died and workplace incidents last year and thousands more died from occupational diseases. He told a London rally: “At least 70 per cent of these deaths and injuries are the direct

result of employer's failure to manage health and safety and could have been prevented." A horse-drawn hearse filled with hard hats led a procession through London, in memory of construction workers killed on site. In Scotland, George Paul, West Lothian trades union council chair, said: "At this year's Scottish Trade Union Congress, delegates called on the General Council to pursue the Scottish Executive to adopt the Corporate Homicide Bill, which gives a clear route for bringing directors, who by negligence and management failure, fail to implement safety procedures." In Preston, CWU regional secretary Carl Webb said: "For years the CWU, along with much of the trade union movement, has pushed for the enactment of a new offence of corporate killing and the imposition of safety duties on company directors who are presently using the confused state of the present law to evade responsibility for many accidents."

- [TGWU news release](#). [CCA news release](#) [The Business](#). [West Lothian TUC news release](#). [CWU news release](#). [The Guardian](#)
- [TUC book of remembrance](#) and [latest GB events listing](#) - [add an entry](#) to the TUC book of remembrance
- [Workers' Memorial Day resources, news and worldwide activities](#)
- [Businessmen behaving badly](#) – what does it cost to kill and maim in Britain's workplaces? Send the government a message – [Killing at work – there should be a law against it postcards](#)

### **HSE cuts will hurt workers**

The safety of workers in Britain is being put at risk as a funding crisis in the HSE threatens to bring the organisation to its knees, the safety inspectors' union Prospect has warned. The union representing 1,750 inspectors, scientists and other professionals in HSE has condemned the government's decision to slash the watchdog's budget. The Prospect warning, issued on Workers' Memorial Day, says that spending cutbacks for 2003-4 mean HSE faces 5 per cent across the board cuts by October, with the result that 50 inspectors due to leave in the next year will not be replaced. Compulsory redundancies have not been ruled out. Steven Kay, chair of Prospect's HSE branch, said: "HSE have reached a position where its ability to fulfil its mission statement - 'to ensure that risks to people's health and safety from work activities is properly controlled' - is in doubt. Workers expect to see their workplaces inspected by qualified experienced staff. The loss

of 50 inspectors will clearly lead to fewer inspections and investigations.” Richard Hardy, Prospect negotiator for HSE, said initial optimism when the government launched its **Revitalising health and safety** initiative had now evaporated. “Three years later, it is clear that the 2004 targets for reducing work-related accidents and ill health will not be met and the Executive faces another cost-cutting exercise. This is the opposite of joined-up government.”

- [Prospect news release](#) and the [Prospects for Safety campaign](#)

### **PCS say end crown immunity on safety crimes**

Civil service union PCS wants the government to honour a commitment made nearly three years ago to remove crown immunity for health and safety offences. Making the call on Workers’ Memorial Day, the union says the majority of government departments and agencies are immune from criminal prosecution by the HSE. It wants “the government to lead by example in creating real corporate social responsibility and corporate accountability for workers’ health and safety.” Phil Madelin, PCS health and safety officer, said: “It is unjust and sends out the wrong message when the worst that can happen to a government department breaching health and safety is a slap on the wrist and quiet talking to, when other organisations can get prosecuted if they don’t comply with the law.” He added: “The problems with crown immunity were well documented earlier this year over the death of a worker at the Royal Mint ([Risks 72](#) and [Risks 102](#)) and despite this and a government commitment in June 2000, we have seen no real progress in getting rid of crown immunity.” An inquest jury this week returned a verdict of unlawful killing on Royal Mint worker John Wynne, crushed to death at the South Wales plant almost two years ago.

- [PCS news release](#). [BBC News Online](#)

### **Australia: Unions call for action on safety crimes**

Union organisations from across Australia have called for action to make employers properly accountable for workplace safety crimes. New South Wales Labor Council called on Workers’ Memorial Day for the state government to use criminal law to punish employers whose negligence leads to workplace deaths. Labor Council secretary John Robertson said: “The Minister for Industrial Relations John Della Bosca assured us last year the existing laws were adequate and we took him on his word. He even set up a specialist unit within WorkCover to consider criminal prosecutions, but nearly 12 months later we have not

seen any action out of this unit." In Victoria, Victorian Trades Hall Council secretary Leigh Hubbard said tougher penalties were needed to deal with serious breaches of occupational health and safety laws that led to workplace deaths. In South Australia, the United Trades and Labor Council (UTLC) said tougher penalties would act as a deterrent, not just a punishment. "We need massively increased fines and significant jail terms for bosses who put workers' lives on the line," council secretary Janet Giles said.

- [LaborNet](#). [VTHC OHS Rep](#). [VTHC news release](#). [The Australian](#). [Yahoo News](#). [Workers Online](#). [Workers' Memorial Day in Australia](#)

### **Global: The silent war – 5,000 workers killed each day**

The international federation of metalworkers' unions says the deadly price of work – 5,000 fatal injuries a day – amounts to a "silent war" against workers. "'Fatal' would imply this has something to do with fate, in other words something that is bound to happen. This is not the case," says Toni Ferigo, IMF health and safety specialist. "There are clear causes of this dramatic 'silent war', such as working extended hours, lack of investment in health and safety, lack of training, deregulation and the negligence of employers to respect basic legislation." IMF says the most fitting way to commemorate those killed at work is its a four point plan: bringing justice to the dead and injured by punishing the criminals who are responsible; increasing workers' participation in prevention policies; seeking legislation which meets at least basic ILO standards; and increasing health and safety investment in the workplace.

- [IMF news release](#)
- [WMD 2003 activities worldwide](#) – from Australia to Zimbabwe
- [ILO background document, news releases and briefing. Safety in numbers: Pointers for a global safety culture at work, ILO Report 28 April 2003](#)
- [Hazards "working world" webpages](#)

### **New Zealand: Workers stop and remember the dead**

Union members across New Zealand stopped work to remember colleagues who have lost their lives at work. Workers' Memorial Day activities included erecting memorials, marches and in Wellington a one minute train stoppage at noon on 28 April while rail workers paid

their respects to workmates who lost their lives at work last year. New Zealand Council of Trade Unions (NZCTU) president Ross Wilson said: "Here in New Zealand, OSH investigated 74 work-related deaths last year - the largest number for a decade. Hundreds of others die each year of occupational illness. Our work-related death, accident and illness toll is totally unacceptable." NZCTU also launched new national campaign: "The 'Unions talking health and safety' campaign is about genuine worker involvement in health and safety," said Ross Wilson.

- [NZCTU news release. New Zealand Herald. Workers' Memorial Day in New Zealand](#)

## UNION NEWS

### **TUC tells employers to stop whingeing about insurance costs**

The TUC has told the Engineering Employers Federation (EEF) we'd all feel a lot better if it spent less time whingeing and more time promoting safer workplaces. The TUC comments came in response to EEF criticism of government plans to recover the NHS costs of workplace accidents through the employers' liability insurance system ([Risk 98](#)). EEF had called for the proposal to be dropped from the Health and Social Care Bill, saying it would "add costs of over £150m to the UK's already overheating employers' liability (EL) insurance system." Brendan Barber, TUC general secretary elect, commented: "The EEF should stop whingeing and face up to their responsibilities as employers. They should pay a little more attention to promoting health and safety at work, and spend a little less time trying to evade the consequences of their actions. Even after the Department of Health makes these changes, employers will still be paying less for the injuries and illnesses which they cause than victims or taxpayers." TUC is hoping to persuade the government to free up £30-40m of the recovered cash for rehabilitation schemes for sick and injured workers.

- [TUC news release. EEF news release](#)

### **Union activist reinstated by rail firm**

A union activist whose demotion sparked a strike at a leading rail company has been reinstated as a train driver. Greg Tucker won his claim for unfair dismissal against South West Trains (SWT) last year ([Risks 74](#)) after claiming he was victimised because of his activities for the Rail Maritime and Transport union (RMT). He was demoted to the post of revenue protection clerk after being accused by the company of serious safety lapses, charges the Tribunal dismissed as "implausible".

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that SWT had done the only honourable thing in reinstating Mr Tucker. An SWT spokesperson confirmed that Mr Tucker had taken up the offer of reinstatement.

- [Ananova. Advice: Hazards guide to protecting yourself from victimisation](#)

### **Respect to shopworkers – and freedom from fear**



The growing incidence of violence against shopworkers should be the focus of an awareness day says their union. The shopworkers' union, Usdaw, is calling for a "national respect day". It wants the day, scheduled for 17 September, to highlight and help combat the physical and verbal abuse faced by some its members. At least one shop worker is attacked every hour of each working day and verbal abuse is routine ([Risks 83](#)). The union this week said its campaign to protect its members from violence and abuse received a major boost after a string of top retailers signed up to its Charter of Respect. Employers' groups the British Retail Consortium and the Association of Convenience Stores, together with Littlewoods, the Co-op Group, TJ Hughes, Iceland, Morrisons, United Co-op and Sainsbury's have endorsed the Charter which sets out clear demands for respect, courtesy and dignity for the nation's shopworkers. Usdaw deputy general secretary John Hannett. "The Charter marks an important next step for us as we aim to protect our members from violence and abuse in the workplace," he said. "I'm delighted to have a string of top level endorsements for the Charter and we expect more companies to sign up soon."

- [BBC News Online. Usdaw news releases on the National Respect Day and Charter of respect. Usdaw Freedom from fear campaign](#)

### **Guard strikes suspended after talks bring progress**

Strikes called by RMT train crew members on 6-7 May and 27-28 May ([Risks 103](#)) have been called off after talks with 12 operating companies "yielded substantial progress" towards resolving the dispute over the safety role of train guards. "The train operators have agreed that RMT and our sister union, Aslef, should be included in consultations on changes to the operational rule book," RMT general secretary Bob Crow said. He said the train operating companies had agreed to request that the Railway Safety and Standards Board include

rail unions in a group set up to prepare an amendment to the rule book. "This means that the views of railway workers - the people who, after all, carry out the provisions of the rule book - will now be heard," said Crow, adding that there were indications all the train operating companies would now accept the main demands of the union. "Our members around the country have shown tremendous discipline and determination in the long campaign to restore the full safety role of the guard," he said. A spokesperson for the Association of Train Operating Companies, which represents the rail firms affected by the dispute, said: "The dispute has been settled. This is good news for passengers."

- [RMT news release](#). [BBC News Online](#)

### **Print union wins bladder cancer risk argument**

A union campaign to get bladder cancer recognised as an occupational disease in printers has ended in success. After years of lobbying, the print union GPMU says it "has scored a significant victory in persuading the Benefits Agency to recognise that printers suffer from bladder cancer." It says a meeting with health and safety minister Nick Brown led to official guidance being redrafted. A new clause, drawn up in consultation with GPMU, acknowledges that inks and dyes used in the printing industry can contain chemicals known to cause bladder cancer. In advice to members, GPMU says: "Any member diagnosed with bladder cancer should contact their local benefits agency, and make a claim using form BI100B, Industrial injuries disablement benefit for an industrial disease." It adds that members who worked in the printing industry before 1979 and who develop bladder cancer "have an especially strong case for benefit and should contact their branch." GPMU national officer Mike Griffiths said: "This shows the value of our political work at Westminster. Nick Brown responded very positively to our concerns. The outcome will ensure proper and speedier resolution of claims from printers with bladder cancer."

- [GPMU news release](#)

### **UNISON urges NHS to take a stab at injury prevention**

Health service union UNISON is urging the Department of Health to take a lead and introduce safer needles to help combat needlestick injuries. The call comes in the wake of a new report from the National Audit Office that shows that needlestick injuries are now the second biggest occupational risk for health care workers after aggression and violence. Jon Richards, UNISON national officer and a member of the NAO Expert Advisory Group, said: "It is shocking that health care

workers continue to be put at risk from viruses such as HIV and Hepatitis C when there are practical alternatives to existing needles there for the taking." He added: "The latest research from the US shows a dramatic drop in needlestick injuries following new safety legislation and the introduction of safer needles. Injuries have been cut in half and if its good enough for workers in America its good enough for our nurses, paramedics and NHS staff here." He said corner cutting was "a false economy because needlestick injuries lead to a range of expensive tests for diseases, time off work, compensation claims and more importantly a great deal of both physical and mental anguish."

- [UNISON news release](#). [BBC News Online](#)
- **Guidance:** [UNISON needlesticks campaign](#) and [Hazards needlesticks webpage](#)
- **Also see:** [NHS blames workload for 24 per cent rise in work accidents](#)

## OTHER NEWS

### **NHS blames workload for 24 per cent rise in work accidents**

The number of accidents involving NHS staff increased by almost a quarter - despite a government pledge to cut the number by 20 per cent. A report from the public sector watchdog the National Audit Office (NAO) says accidents could now be costing the NHS at least £173m a year and blamed much of the increase on soaring workloads and staff shortages. More than a fifth of the 297 NHS trusts in England said staff shortages and increased workloads were the reason for failing to meet targets. The 24 per cent increase in NHS accidents to 135,000 was mainly attributable to "needlestick" injuries, slips, trips and falls, exposure to hazardous substances, and strains while moving patients. The NAO said the NHS should develop a national health and safety strategy and provide more guidance for trusts. Sir John Bourn, head of the NAO, said: "At a time when it is crucial to recruit and retain staff, the NHS must show that the health and safety of its staff is a top priority." GMB safety director Kim Sunley said the union was alarmed at a NAO finding that many trusts had no control over contractor safety. She said: "It is unacceptable that people's lives could be put at risk due to private contractors cutting corners on health and safety. NHS services should not be contracted out but where they are, the private companies should be monitored and made accountable for health and safety."

- [NAO news release](#). [The Guardian](#). [BBC News Online](#).

[Reuters Health](#). [GMB news release](#). **A safer place to work: Improving the management of health and safety risks to staff in NHS trusts, HC 623 2002-2003, ISBN: 0102921431, £10.75. Free online: [Full report](#) and [executive summary](#) [both pdf files]**

### **Calls to cut risks to nurses**

Community nurses risk facing violence in patients' homes but receive little protection from the NHS, nurses claim. The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) said in one case, a district nurse had been held hostage by a patient's husband when she went to visit her at home. One in three nurses report they have been physically assaulted at work during their career, an RCN survey showed last year. A separate RCN study of 1,300 nurses in Wales - Value Nursing - revealed 40 per cent had been involved in some kind of violent incident during a 12-month period, a finding RCN described as "alarming". It adds that occupational diseases are also leading to the loss of trained staff from the health service. RCN points to the case of Wendy Mitchelmore, who received a £146,000 payout after developing asthma from direct exposure to glutaraldehyde - a disinfectant - while working for Gwynedd NHS Hospital. She was forced to quit her job at 36 and the trust later accepted liability for failing to undertake proper risk assessments. RCN has launched its own safety campaign, Be sharp be safe, and an anti-violence initiative, Working well.

- [BBC Wales](#) and [BBC News Online](#). [RCN news release](#)

### **Lowest recorded sick leave still leaves bosses griping**

The Confederation of British Industry wants to pin the blame for workplace "sickies" on workers, despite its own research showing sick leave has plummeted to the lowest level ever recorded by a CBI survey. It says employers fear that staff "pulling sickies" could have cost business £1.75bn last year alone, with many firms worrying that up to 15 per cent of absence is not genuine. *The lost billions*, the report of CBI's annual absence survey, says firms paid £11.6bn in 2002 to cover the salaries of absent individuals and the resulting overtime and temporary cover, or an average cost of £476 per employee. CBI says the number of working days lost fell by 5.7 per cent in this survey, from 176 million in 2001 to 166 million in 2002 - 6.8 days per employee or 2.9 per cent of total working time, the lowest figures recorded since the survey began in 1987. John Cridland, CBI deputy director general, said: "Though employers believe most absence is caused by genuine minor sickness, there are serious

concerns about the number of staff 'throwing sickies'. There are too many people who will happily spend the day off work at the expense of their employers and their hard working colleagues." TUC's Owen Tudor commented: "The CBI's figures highlight the failure of employers to tackle long term sickness rates which now account for a third of all sick leave - over 50 million days a year! Employer provision of rehabilitation has stalled - the best do it, the rest don't, and Britain's workers suffer poverty and ill-health as a result." He added: "All the evidence shows that 'sickies' are a tiny fraction of all the sick leave taken, and often result from workers having to make up excuses to care for sick children or ageing parents."

- [CBI news release](#). [The Independent](#). [The Sun](#). [BBC News Online](#)

## INTERNATIONAL

### **Australia: The ultimate piss off**

Wollongong workers on poverty-level wages are losing up to Aus\$5,000 (£2,000) for taking toilet breaks, according to the union representing staff at a Stellar call centre. Other employees claim they have lost their bonuses, worth up to \$5,000 a year, for using sick leave entitlements. The bonuses are significant to workers earning only \$25,000 (\$10,000) a year thanks to non-negotiable contracts that have slashed base earnings from the \$35,000 (£14,000) paid by their previous employer Telstra, prior to the jobs being outsourced. The workers' union, CPSU, is investigating suspected breaches of the Workplace Relations Act at Stellar call centres at Wollongong, Hornsby, Adelaide and Robina, and says it believes workers have been conned into accepting the new contracts. CPSU official Larissa Andelman said the reported use of bonuses to dissuade people from using their sick leave is a major concern to members. Stellar call centres are understood to have an unusually high number of employees absent on stress leave, CPSU says.

- [Workers Onliine](#). [Hazards toilet breaks guide](#) – including case histories and a guide to related health problems and the work breaks law. [TUC WorkSmart guide](#)
- **The TUC wants workers to send in their loo break laments so it can shame bad bosses into providing better toilet breaks. Examples of disrespect can be sent by email to [badbogs@worksmart.org.uk](mailto:badbogs@worksmart.org.uk) or**

**posted to "Got to Go" at TUC, Congress House,  
Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3LS**

### **Canada: Tax relief on fines "disgusting" say unions**

Unions in Ontario want tax law changes so companies can no longer deduct penalties and fines as a cost of doing business. Employers can benefit by breaking the law, said Wayne Fraser, a director of the United Steelworkers Union. If a company has to pay for breaking a rule – for example, discharging pollutants or being fined for the death of a worker – they can deduct the payment as a cost, reducing their profit and saving on their corporate income tax bill. The Ontario Federation of Labour has asked Canada's national government and Ontario's provincial government to close the "loophole" that allows the deduction. So far, there's been no response. Ontario fined 41 companies Can\$6.4 million (£2.8m) last year for health and safety violations, but companies could recover some of that money through the tax system. "It's disgusting," said the OFL's Wayne Samuelson.

- [CBC News](#)

### **Indonesia: Worst place for safety in south east Asia**

Indonesia's safety record remains the worst in south east Asia, a report says. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) report, released on Workers' Memorial Day, reveals that industrial accidents are occurring at a rate of 300 accidents per day. Citing the Indonesian Occupational Safety and Health Council, ILO said that only 80 per cent local companies had complied with the regulations and had been granted zero-accident certification. "The ILO calls for joint efforts to improve worker safety," said the report, stressing that a strong safety and health culture in all enterprises was a key to preventing both occupational death and disease. President Megawati Soekarnoputri called in January on companies to improve the safety of their workers. Workers' insurance statistics show the number of accidents in 2001 reached 104,000 in Indonesia, with more than 1,000 fatalities.

- [Jakarta Post](#)

## **GLOBAL SARS UPDATE**

### **UNISON welcomes SARS action**

The UK will screen arriving passengers from countries affected by the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) epidemic. Health secretary Alan Milburn MP made the announcement in an emergency Commons

statement on the crisis. Authorities will be allowed to check passengers on flights from countries experiencing SARS outbreaks, and passengers might be asked to declare they have had no contact with the disease. Health care union UNISON says the measures are a step in the right direction, but could be strengthened. The union's head of health and safety Hugh Robertson said passengers should be provided better information on what to do if they developed any symptoms. UNISON has already called on universities and colleges to do more to inform staff and students on how to avoid any risk. It has also written to health branches asking them to ensure that risk assessments are carried out and all staff informed about what precautions to take. Robertson said: "So far the response has been appropriate to the scale of the problem, but it's important not to spread panic or hype up the dangers. At the same time reasonable common-sense precautions should be taken."

- **UNISON [news release](#) and [SARS guidance](#). [The Independent](#)**
- **Find out more from [Labourstart's unions and SARS news page](#) and the [Hazards SARS guide](#)**

#### **Australia: Workers plan virus defence**

Unions across Australia are acting to limit the affects of the SARS virus on jobs and health. Concern about exposure to the virus is spreading from medical staff on the infection frontline to anxious taxi drivers, teachers, baggage handlers, cleaners and hospitality staff. Hospitality union LHMU is calling for affected staff to receive wages and compensation from employers. The Transport Workers Union, which represents airport cleaners, caterers and baggage handlers, is meeting this week to assess precautions its members should be taking. Ambulance Employees Association secretary Rod Morris said paramedics had been issued protective equipment and control procedures. In New South Wales, unions welcomed the state government's decision to convene a SARS taskforce. NSW Labor Council secretary John Robertson said unions would participate on the taskforce, adding: "We will be arguing strongly that there can be no compromising the safety of health workers, several of whom have contracted the virus in Asian hospitals." He added: "We will also ask the government to develop plans to ensure the safety of workers in frontline positions such as tourism, particularly flight attendants and workers within our airports."

- **[The Herald Sun](#). [LaborNet](#)**

### **Canada: Unions demand action on SARS**

Unions in Canada are demanding urgent action to address the health and economic consequences of Toronto's SARS outbreak. Ken Georgetti, president of the Canadian Labour Congress, and Nick Worhaug, Canadian director of the hospitality union HERE, have called on human resources minister Jane Stewart to address a situation which has left thousands of workers unemployed as a result of the SARS outbreak yet ineligible to access their Employment Insurance (EI) benefits, with part-time women workers the worst affected. The union leaders want temporary emergency measures to allow these workers access to benefits. CLC's Ken Georgetti has also called on prime minister Jean Chretien to convene this month an "emergency national summit of government, labour, business and community leaders in Toronto to deal with the social and economic impacts" of the outbreak. Flight attendants' union CUPE has accused Air Canada of risking the health of staff and passengers by refusing to provide crews with masks and gloves. In the health care sector, five Toronto nurses are reported to have resigned from at least two hospitals as a result of the additional stress of working long hours because of the SARS outbreak. US car firms have quarantined those workers at their Canadian plants they consider may have been exposed to the virus.

- **Canada Wire on the [employment insurance and summit](#) calls. [The Gazette](#) on flight risks. [Toronto Star](#) and [CBC News](#) on the nurse resignations. [Miami Herald](#) on the [car plant quarantines](#)**

### **Hong Kong: Officials admit use of faulty SARS masks**

Some surgical masks provided to medical workers treating patients with the SARS virus were faulty, Hong Kong's Hospital Authority admitted, one day after a nurse died of the disease. "When we conducted random checks of the surgical masks, we found a small number were faulty," Hospital Authority spokesperson Raymond Lo said. The admission comes after criticism that the authority has failed to provide medical workers with adequate protective gear against the virus. The death on Saturday of a 38-year-old nurse, the first medical worker to die in Hong Kong, has added fuel to the criticism. Lo said the matter had been referred to police, but would not say why the police had been brought in. "As the case is under investigation, we cannot comment on the matter," he said. Legislator Lee Cheuk-yan said the Hospital Authority's revelation was "shocking" and it was "grossly negligent of them to provide this type of faulty medical equipment for

its staff." More than one in five of those found to have the infection are health service staff.

- [Yahoo News](#)

## RESOURCES

### **GMB update on computers and RSI prevention**

A new update from GMB provides details of new legal requirements on screen-based work. GMB says: "A European Judgment now means that more workers are classified as Display Screen Equipment (DSE) users and are therefore entitled to free eye tests. These include security guards who monitor CCTV screens and microelectronic assembly or testing operatives who use DSE to view tests or completed components." The union adds: "In addition, airport check in staff may also be entitled to free eye tests if a large amount of their daily work involves work on DSE." The GMB guide outlines the new requirements.

- [GMB Health and Safety Matters No.41](#)

### **ILO safety training kit**

The International Labour Organisation's workers' bureau, ACTRAV, has made a detailed and accessible training guide available online. Hard copies of the modular guide, first published in 1996, can also be purchased in English and Spanish editions from ILO, and a CD version, available in English, French and Spanish editions, is available free.

- [Your health and safety at work - ILO ACTRAV guide.](#)  
**To order hard copies (£27) or CDs (free), email [ACTRAV](#). Hard copies can also be ordered via the [ILO Publications](#) webpage**

## EVENTS AND COURSES

### **TUC courses for safety reps**

#### **COURSES FOR APRIL TO JULY 2003:**

[Midlands](#), [North](#), [Scotland](#), [South East and East Anglia](#), [South West](#), [Wales](#), Yorkshire and Humberside

Only newly announced events, events next week and very important events will be listed here in future. But there is a comprehensive listing of [health and safety events](#) on the TUC website – bookmark it for easy reference!

### **Law enforcement and corporate accountability, 7 July**

Government ministers, MPs from all main political parties, trade unions, employer organisations, bereaved families and the Health and Safety Executive are all speaking at the TUC-Centre for Corporate Accountability 3rd joint conference on "Law enforcement and corporate accountability." Speakers Include: Rt. Hon. Nick Brown MP, minister for work; Brendan Barber, TUC; Janet Asherson, CBI; Anne Jones, Simon Jones Memorial Campaign; Neal Stone, HSE; Lord Falconer; Home Office minister; Patricia Peters, Institute of Directors; Tony Lloyd MP, chair, TU group of Labour MPs; Ross Cranston QC MP, former Solicitor General; and many more...

- [Registration/further details](#) for the **Law enforcement and corporate accountability conference, Monday 7 July, TUC, Congress Centre, Great Russell St, London WC1. Standard fee £25 (£40 for lawyers and businesses). Contact [Sugar Munthali](#) at CCA on 0207 490 4494**

### **Hazards Conference, 5-7 September**

The Hazards Conference will be in London. Margaret Sharkey at the London Hazards Centre is the co-ordinator of the London end of the organisation. You can contact her via e-mail at [margaret@lhc.org.uk](mailto:margaret@lhc.org.uk) or on 020 7794 5999.

### **European Week for Health and Safety at Work, 13-19 October**

The theme for the Week in 2003 will be 'dangerous substances' (EU Agency [press release](#)). The TUC will be stressing the hierarchy of control, and especially the need for substitutes and general toxic use reduction strategies. Key hazards dealt with will include asbestos, asthmagens and solvents. [Future years' themes](#) have also now been decided.

## **USEFUL LINKS**

**Visit** the TUC [http://www.tuc.org.uk/h\\_and\\_s/](http://www.tuc.org.uk/h_and_s/) website pages on health and safety. See what's on offer from [TUC Publications](#) and [What's On in health and safety](#).

**Subscribe** to [Hazards](#) magazine, supported by the TUC as a key source of information for union safety reps.

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